

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

CTWR 305: The Relationship Screenplay

Fall 2024, 4 units, Section 19161

Wednesdays, 4:00 – 6:50 pm

Location: SCB 304

Professor: Tyger Williams

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Office: SCA 359

Phone: (310) 890-6242

Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

I confess to more than a few questions about our objective. For starters, isn't all good screenwriting based on character development? Aren't all screenplays relationship screenplays? Let's begin the course by discussing these questions.

Regardless, it is a great pleasure to instruct screenwriting focusing on characters and their relationships. This is a storytelling tool that will be invaluable to you, no matter what writing you pursue –in fact, it is the storytelling tool. If your story creates characters that engage, who are all-too-recognizably human, who touch, captivate, horrify, repel, or seduce the audience, you will have written successfully.

The objective is to write a feature-length screenplay that takes shape in one semester, beginning with your characters. We'll spend the beginning weeks in class discussions focusing on character development. Your story and structure will spring from your characters' conflicts, from their wants and needs, and not vice versa.

The feature-length screenplay will be due during exam week at the end of the semester and will serve as your final exam.

COURSE GOALS:

To develop and write the first draft of a feature-length screenplay that focuses on characters, their motivations, and their relationships with other characters.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

- Class attendance (see "Writing Division Attendance Policy")
- Assignments/ Participation in discussions
- Completed first draft screenplay

RECOMMENDED READING:

Screenwriting is Rewriting by Jack Epps Jr.
The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley
The Art of Dramatic Writing by Lajos Egri

GRADING CRITERIA:

Class critique and discussion: 10%
Weekly written assignments: 50%
First Draft: 40%

WRITING DIVISION ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to be on time, prepared for each class, and meet professional standards. CTWR 305 only meets once a week and timely attendance is mandatory and failure to attend all class sessions from beginning to end may affect grades. Students are allowed two absences throughout the semester. On the third absence, students will have their final grade lowered by 10% and an additional 10% for each absence thereafter. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

NOTE: Exceptions will be made in the case of religious holidays and DSP accommodations.

In the case of medical emergencies, family emergencies, or allowances needed for personal well-being, all concerns must be communicated and approved by the Instructor. If there is a difference of opinion, the student can contact the Writing Division at (213) 740-3303 or writing@cinema.usc.edu

Exemptions to the attendance policy will be allowed on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).

Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments. Faculty are no longer required to provide an option for students to zoom into class. However, Faculty may choose to use zoom at their discretion in an effort to help students stay current in their course work.

If a student has an emergency and additional accommodations are needed, those accommodations will need to come through the USC Campus Support and Intervention (CSI) office. The Writing Division recommends the student and/or advocate contact CSI at 213-821-4710 and their home department adviser for additional support.

Students must contact the professor 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class for any reason.

COMPUTER/TABLET/CELL PHONE USE

You are not allowed to use computers, tablets, or phones in class.

If you use your phone, tablet, or computer in class after one warning, your grade will be lowered by one third for every additional time you use your phone, tablet, or computer in class. (Example: A- to B+.)

RECORDING OF LECTURES IS PROHIBITED AND WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION.

INTERNET, PODCASTING, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND BLOGGING POLICY

Our class lectures and discussions are considered private communications. Not only will we be sharing personal stories, but we'll be sharing intellectual property. Additionally, students and guests come into the class with an understanding that their open and free discussion will be in the safety and privacy of a classroom. Anything that takes place in the class, be it discussions. Debates. Guests talking and/or including lecture material, is off-limits when it comes to posting anywhere on the internet.

A.I. POLICY

The uses of generative Artificial Intelligence to create narrative continue to evolve throughout the media workplace. However, it is vital that before relying on AI to assist in aspects of storytelling that we learn to source and execute our work via our own unique imagination.

Creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course. All assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Class 1, August 28:

Introductory remarks. Discussion of syllabus and overall objectives. Discussion of each student's 2 or 3 story ideas.

Assignment: Prepare a description of your central character for each story, as if you were introducing them to the class. Be mindful of what they believe they want, what they believe they need, why they think that, and what you think they really need.

Class 2, September 4:

Discuss characters from each story idea. Choose which story to write.

Assignment: Examine your characters for your project. Flesh out the central character, their arc, their wants and needs. Describe the other characters, their wants and needs and their relationship to the central character.

Class 3, September 11:

Discuss characters and their relationships.

Assignment: Write up character traits and biography for secondary characters, and describe their relationships with one another. Focus on conflict.

Assignment: Write a three page Synopsis of your story. Remember to follow the central character as the backbone of your narrative arc. ??????Make a Character Wheel. ???????

Class 4, September 18:

Discuss synopsis.

Assignment: expand synopsis to a five -page treatment. Always thinking about the character as the engine of your story.

Class 5, September 25:

Discuss treatment.

Assignment: Begin a step outline, (1st half of script.)

Class 6, October 2:

Discuss step outline.

Assignment: Finish step outline, (2nd half of script.)

Class 7, October 9:

Discuss step outline.

Assignment: begin writing, (15 pages.)

Class 8, October 16: *(or Midterm)*

Discuss pages

Assignment: continue writing (10 -15 pages.)

Class 9, October 23:

Discuss pages.

Assignment: continue writing (10 -15 pages.)

Class 10, October 30:

Discuss pages.

Assignment: continue writing (10 -15 pages.)

Class 11, November 6:

Discuss pages.

Assignment: continue writing, (10 -15 pages.)

Class 12, November 13:

Discuss pages.

Assignment: continue writing, (10 -15 pages.)

Class 13, November 20:

Discuss pages.

Assignment: Complete Screenplay

Class 14, November 27:

Discuss pages.

Assignment: Complete Screenplay

Class 15, December 4:

Final Class: Screenplays due

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL:

The written assignments will be due by noon on the Monday previous to each class. You'll be expected to come to class with notes on your colleagues' pages for class discussion.

Please remember to keep the tone of discussion collaborative, generous, and non-competitive. The safer everyone feels in discussion, the more likely it will be that you are free to explore and express your creative convictions.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the Workshop on plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) -(213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline -1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) -(213) 740-4900 -24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to genderbased harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.

<https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response.

<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessmentresponse-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710 Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24hour emergency assistance or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community.

<http://dps.usc.edu>

DISRUPTIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending the resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX.